(b) whether Government have come across report/complaints pertaining to collusion between emigration staff at Mumbai and travel agents registered with Government for overseas placements; and

(c) if so, whether Government have initiated any action on such reports/ complaints by transfer/suspension of the involved staff and/orblacklisting the errant travel agents?

THE MINSTER OF LABOUR (SHRI SAHIB SINGH VERMA): (a) to (c) There is no Emigration Section at the Mimbai Airport, However, there is an Office of Protector of Emigrants (POE), under the Ministry of Labour, located in Mumbai city.

On the basis of some complaints against the officers and staff members of the Office of the Protector of Emigrants, Mumbai, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) conducted a raid on that office on 22.2.2002. The CBI has seized some documents and two Assistants were taken into constody for interrogation. These two Assistants have since been placed under suspension with effect from 23.2.2002. The case is under investigation by CBI. On receipt of the CBI report, appropriate disciplinary action will be taken against the officials reported to have been involved in irregularities.

On the basis of other complaints received regarding cheating of the workers,Registration Certificates of 7 recruiting agents of Mumbai have been suspended and those of 3 have been concelled, during the current year (up to 15.7.2002).

OIC Membership to India

†*164. SHRI HARENDRA SINGH MALIK: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that the proposal of Qatar to grant Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC) membership to India in the conference of Islamic countries held in Khartum has been turned down;

(b) if so, the details thereof and also the reasons therefor; and

(c) Government's reaction thereto?

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) and (b) The Foreign Minister of Qatar His Excellency Sheikh Hamad Bin Jassim Bin Jabor Al-Thani, is his speech at the plenary meeting of the Organisation of the Islmaic Conference Foreign Ministers held in Khartum from June 25-27, 2002 proposed admission of India into Organization of the Islamic Conference as observer in the first instance to be followed by full membership of the organization at a later date. It has been reported that the Qatari Foreign Minister made this proposal in the context of a vision of the Organization's relations with non-member states which have large Muslim communities, and the need to promote understanding and civilizational dialogue among cultures as a new approach to bring about security and stability. However, as per the available reports. Qatar subsequently withdrew the proposal.

(c) We see it as a recognition of the fact that the second largest Muslim community in the world lives in India. While we have excellent bilateral relations with most member states of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. India is not a member of the Organization and has not considered applying for it.

Continuation of Department of Posts

†*165. SHRI RAMA SHANKER KAUSHIK: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) what are the reasons for withdrawing the concession available to newspapers and magazines under the Indian Post Office Act instead of making use of the provisions of article 4 of the same Act; and

(b) what steps are being taken by Government to protect the honour and existence of the Department of Posts and Telegraph and increasing the sale of tickets?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICAITONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN): (a) and (b) Newspapers and magazines continue to be transmitted by post at the tariff prescribed. As there is no provision for concession in these items, there is no question of withdrawing concession. Moreover, provisions of Section 4 of the Indian

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.